

2016



Louisiana Blue Crab

Commercial Rules and Regulations

Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries



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Harvesters

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Commercial Harvester Licenses and Fees

To harvest blue crab commercially in Louisiana's waters, you must have the following licenses issued by LDWF:

- A **Commercial Fisherman's License*** (\$55 resident, \$460 nonresident)
- A **Vessel License** in the vessel owner's name (\$15 resident, \$60 nonresident), unless crabbing with legal land-based gear or in areas not designated as saltwater
- **Gear Licenses*** for the fishing gear you're using:
 - For any legal number of crab traps** (\$50 resident, \$200 nonresident)
 - For each butterfly, cast, dip, drop, skimmer, or trawl net (\$25 resident, \$100 nonresident). If using these gears during shrimp season, you must also pay an annual gear fee (\$10 resident, \$40 nonresident).
 - For any legal number of bush, hand, or trotlines (\$25 resident, \$100 nonresident)

*If you are a Louisiana resident, age 70 or older, you may instead purchase a **Senior Commercial License** (includes gear license) for \$20.

As of November 14, 2014, any commercial fisherman applying for a **Crab Trap Gear License must have either (1) possessed a valid commercial Crab Trap Gear License in any two of the following years: 2011, 2012, 2013, and 2014; or (2) possessed a valid Wholesale/Retail Seafood Dealer License and can demonstrate crab landings through trip ticket submissions during any two years between 2011 and 2014. Otherwise, they must first enroll in and

complete a crab industry professionalism program. See www.wlf.louisiana.gov/crabtraining for details.

To sell blue crabs you have caught to anyone who doesn't have a Wholesale/Retail Seafood Dealer License (besides consumers) or transport your catch out-of-state, you must have a **Wholesale/Retail Seafood Dealer License** (\$250 resident, \$1,105 nonresident).

To sell blue crab you have caught directly to consumers within the state, you must have a **Fresh Products License** (\$20 resident, \$120 nonresident). Your spouse must purchase a **Fresh Products-Spouse License** for \$5 to sell directly to consumers.

To apply for LDWF-issued licenses, contact **225-765-2898** or visit LDWF's Headquarters at **2000 Quail Drive in Baton Rouge**. Renew your licenses online at www.la.wildlifelicence.com.

Legal Gear

You may only use the following types of gear to harvest blue crabs in Louisiana's waters:

Crab trap	Trotline
Crab drop net	Handline
Trawl*	Bushline
Skimmer net*	Dip net
Butterfly net*	Cast net

*You may only use trawls and butterfly and skimmer nets to harvest blue crabs during open shrimp seasons and must abide by commercial shrimping regulations.

You may not intentionally use dredges to harvest crabs.

Seasons

You may fish for blue crabs year-round. However, the Commission may prohibit the use of crab traps in certain areas for short periods of time to remove lost or abandoned traps through the Derelict Crab Trap Removal Program.

Size Limits

Hard shell crabs: You may only harvest crabs 5 inches carapace width or wider. Since at least half of the crab population has sexually matured at this size, this minimum size limit helps ensure crabs are able to reproduce and replace those that are harvested. You must immediately return crabs smaller than 5 inches wide back to the water without injury.

Pre-molt crabs*: You may harvest pre-molt crabs smaller than 5 inches carapace width under the following conditions:

- You're holding them for processing as soft shell crabs, OR
- You're selling them to a processor for making soft shell crabs, have properly identified them as pre-molt crabs, and are holding them in a separate container marked "peelers" or "busters".

*Pre-molt crabs are crabs showing signs of molting; the first sign is a white line on the back paddle fin.

Stone crabs: You may only harvest stone crab claws. The claws must measure at least 2-3/4 inches from the tip of the claw to the base of the joint. You may only transfer legal size stone crab claws from a vessel to the shore. You may keep whole stone crabs on a vessel until you have removed their claws; then you must immediately return the crabs to the waters where you harvested them.

Possession Limits

Egg-bearing crabs: You may not harvest any females bearing eggs on their abdomen. You must immediately return egg-bearing crabs to the water without injury to protect this next generation of crabs. No more than 2% of the total number of crabs in your possession may be incidentally harvested, egg-bearing crabs.

Whole stone crabs: You may only harvest stone crab claws; you may

possess one incidentally harvested whole stone crab per crate of blue crabs (or group of blue crabs equivalent to one crate).

Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) and Refuges

Commercial fishing is permitted in:

- Atchafalaya Delta, except in the Limited Access Areas from September to January each year
- Pass-a-Loutre, except in the Limited Access Areas from September to January each year
- Pointe-aux-Chenes (in the Cut Off Canal and Wonder Lake); nighttime fishing is prohibited.

Commercial fishing is prohibited in:

- Elmer's Island
- Isle Derniers Barrier Island
- Rockefeller, State, and Marsh Island
- Salvador.

Bycatch Limits

You may retain for personal consumption up to 25 finfish caught as bycatch in crab traps per vessel per day. However, you may not keep any freshwater gamefish, red drum, or spotted seatrout. Any fish you keep are still subject to recreational size and possession limits.

If you have a gear license which allows you to take finfish for commercial purposes, you may keep any finfish you catch under this license, up to the commercial possession limit for that fish. You do not have to separate this catch from the bycatch described above.

Tagging Requirements

You must tag, mark, or otherwise identify any crabs you sell with your name, license number, and the date you harvested the crabs.

Soft Shell Crab Shedders

If you own or operate a soft shell crab shedding facility, you must have a **Wholesale/Retail Seafood Dealer License** from LDWF (\$250 resident, \$1,105 nonresident). On the 10th of every month, you must report to LDWF the amount of soft shell crabs you produce.

Crab Trap Requirements

Night restrictions	You may not bait, tend, check, or remove crab traps, their contents, lines, buoys, or markers in public waters from one-half hour after legal sunset until one-half hour before legal sunrise.
Trap placement	You must place your traps so vessels can safely navigate waters. Do not set them in navigable channels or entrances to streams.
Unserviceable traps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You must properly dispose of your unserviceable crab traps back at the dock to reduce the risk and potential impact of derelict traps. If you retrieve a trap with a Commission-approved common float, you must return that float to any shrimper for reuse.
Damage to or destruction of traps	Unless you are the crab trap licenseholder (or his agent), you may not intentionally damage or destroy a crab trap, the attached floats or lines, or its contents.
Trap identification	You must mark your traps to identify the owner of the trap, which helps with enforcement. You may use a plastic bait box cover or a 2-inch stainless steel, self-locking tag attached to the center of the trap ceiling to mark trap ownership. Either one must be legibly engraved or embossed with your commercial fisherman license number.
Floats and float lines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You must mark all crab traps with a solid float, 6 inches in diameter or larger, attached with a non-floating line, 1/4 inches in diameter or larger. You do not have to mark traps with a float and line in areas designated as freshwater north of the northern bank of the Intracoastal/ Waterway and west of LA Highway 70 and those areas located on the eastern side of the Mississippi River and inland from the saltwater line, unless you're placing the trap in a lake. You may attach crab traps to a trotline attached to a non-floating line and a visible float measuring at least 6 inches in diameter or 1/2 gallon in volume. You must register each crab trap on a trotline with LDWF and must attach a tag with your commercial fisherman's license number.
Escape rings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each crab trap must have at least two escape rings, 2-5/16 inches in inside diameter or larger, to allow undersized crabs the opportunity to escape the trap. They must be placed on the vertical outside walls flush with the trap floor or baffle. There must be one ring located in each chamber of the trap. Escape rings are not required in Lake Pontchartrain until November 15, 2017 or on any crab trap constructed of square wire mesh 2-5/16 inches or larger. Beginning, November 15, 2017, each trap must have three escape rings, each measuring 2-3/8 inches or larger, with at least two located in the upper chamber. No material should obstruct the escape rings and hamper or prevent crabs from exiting, except from April 1 through June 30 and September 1 through October 31.
Metal tackle and traps	You may not use metal tackle or metal crab traps in any of the public waters north of the Intracoastal Waterway in the Calcasieu River, in any body of water of the Calcasieu River System north of the Intracoastal Canal, or in Vermilion Bay from Cypermort Point one mile offshore to Blue Point.
Closed area	You may not use crab traps in the Tchefuncte River.

Resource Monitoring

LDWF is responsible for monitoring the state's blue crab resource and fishery. Throughout the year, LDWF biologists conduct surveys to monitor the growth, distribution, and abundance of blue crab in Louisiana's waters. They tow trawls at a number of sampling locations to capture crabs; they count and measure the crabs and record observations such as blue crab sex, stage, and presence of external parasites.

LDWF requires that dealers purchasing blue crab from commercial fishermen submit trip tickets to capture information about their catch—for example, what it is, where and how it was caught, and how much was caught. Commercial fishermen who sell their catch directly to consumers are also required to submit trip tickets.

LDWF uses all of this information to assess the status of the blue crab resource and ensure the sustainability of the fishery. According to LDWF's most recent assessment of blue crab (2014), both the population and harvest rates are at appropriate levels (not overfished and no overfishing).

Compliance and Enforcement

Through events, outreach materials, and resources, LDWF works hard to make sure fishermen understand relevant rules and regulations. LDWF's Law Enforcement Division is responsible for ensuring compliance with these rules and regulations through regular patrols and investigations. LDWF partners with NOAA Fisheries and U.S. Coast Guard enforcement agents and officers to increase their enforcement capabilities and carry out their important mission in Louisiana's waters and beyond. Penalties for violations vary with the severity of the violation and include fines, jail time, loss of fishing license, and forfeiture of property.

Any commercial fisherman identified as having sold undersized crabs to a wholesale/retail dealer will be subject to penalties for taking and possessing undersized crabs.

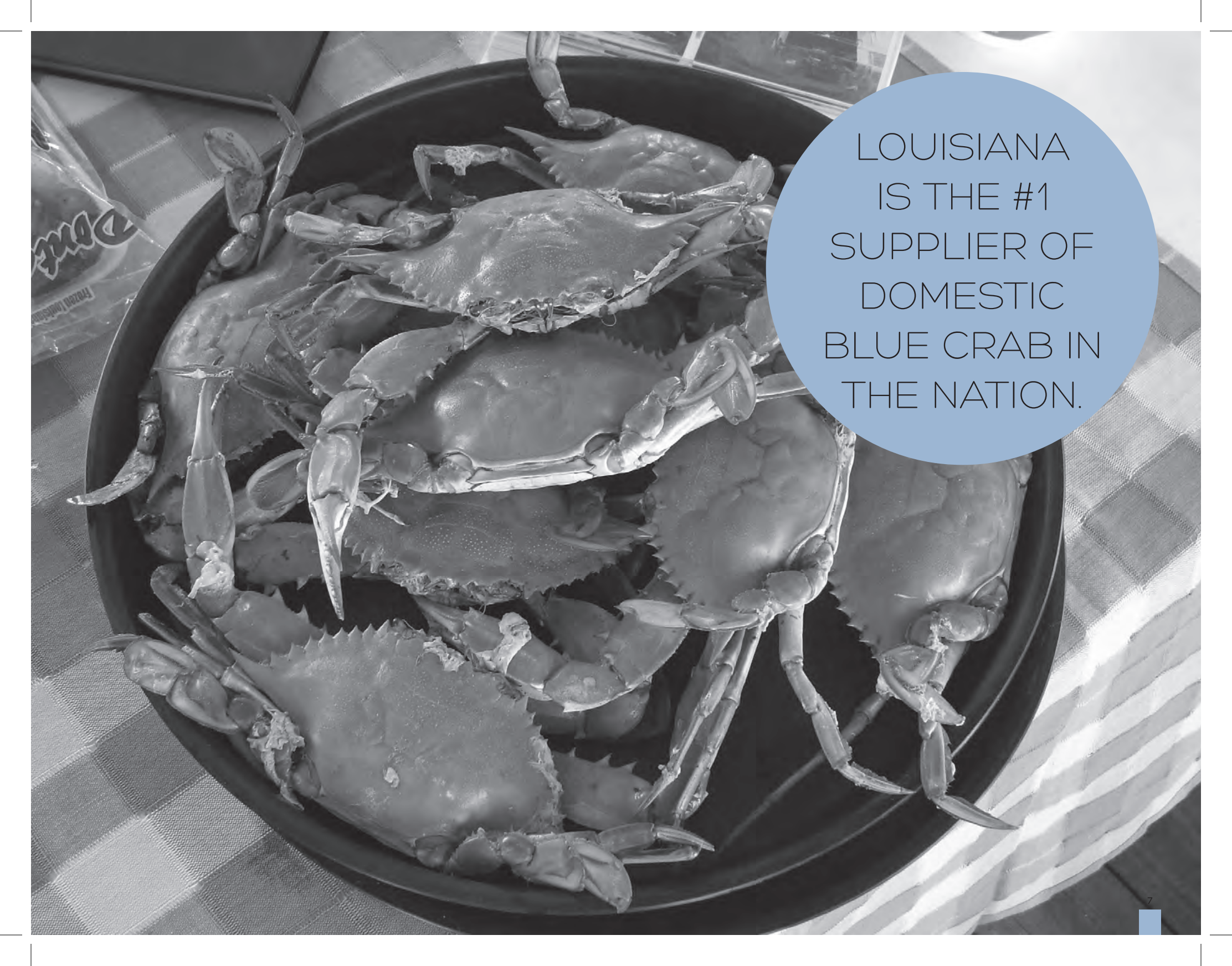


Did you know?

Derelict traps are traps that have been discarded, lost, or abandoned. Derelict traps can “ghost fish” and continue to capture blue crabs and other species. They can also create a navigational hazard for boats and become entangled in other fishing gear such as shrimp nets.

LDWF initiated a volunteer-based Derelict Crab Trap Removal Program in 2004 to remove derelict crab traps and reduce their potential impacts. The program is funded in part by the sale of Louisiana commercial and recreational crab fishing licenses. Since the program began, volunteers have helped remove nearly 25,000 traps.

NOAA's Marine Debris Program recently funded an LDWF proposal to conduct a large-scale, year-round trap clean-up event in Louisiana's three most heavily-fished basins. Throughout 2015-2016, biologists will search for and remove marine debris from their assigned basins. LDWF will also host, with partners, two derelict crab trap rodeos—volunteers will learn about marine debris and help remove derelict traps. LDWF staff will collect and analyze data on all traps and their contents. When possible, collected traps will be fitted with biodegradable panels and reused. Non-usable traps will be used to create educational exhibits or will be recycled.

A black and white photograph of several large blue crabs on a dark plate. The crabs are arranged in a cluster, with their legs and claws visible. The plate is set on a checkered tablecloth. In the background, a plastic bag with the word "Doritos" is partially visible. A blue circular text overlay is positioned in the upper right corner of the image.

LOUISIANA
IS THE #1
SUPPLIER OF
DOMESTIC
BLUE CRAB IN
THE NATION.

Industry Support

Louisiana Wild Seafood Certification Program (LWSCP)



Through LWSCP, LDWF aims to build a brand that guarantees the origin of Louisiana wild-caught seafood. Through strict chain of custody requirements, the program guarantees that all seafood products bearing the Certified Louisiana

Seafood label were caught in Louisiana or Gulf waters by a licensed Louisiana fisherman, landed at a Louisiana dock, and processed and packaged by a Louisiana-based company. The program provides education for participants on best seafood handling and sanitation practices to ensure the utmost safety and quality. When a buyer sees this label, they can be confident they're buying authentic Louisiana wild-caught seafood, a premium product known for freshness, consistent quality, and sustainability, and that they're supporting our local fishing communities.

By branding and showcasing Louisiana seafood, LWSCP helps suppliers increase the value of their seafood and remain competitive in the marketplace. LWSCP participants benefit from free marketing support, such as:

- Market portal linking Certified Louisiana Seafood suppliers with buyers
- Promotions through the program website, social media, and events including seafood festivals and industry conventions
- Point-of-sale materials such as decals, brochures, and apparel
- Access to program partners including the Louisiana Seafood Promotion and Marketing Board, Audubon GULF, NOAA Fisheries, Louisiana Sea Grant, and other partners who purchase and promote Certified Louisiana Seafood.

Licensed Louisiana commercial fishermen are automatically eligible for the program; licensed Louisiana Fresh Products dealers and Wholesale/Retail Seafood dealers must obtain a permit to participate. They must also comply with all state and federal permitting and reporting requirements. Find out more or sign up to participate at www.LouisianaCertifiedSeafood.com.

Seafood Technology Equipment Program (STEP)

STEP provides LWSCP participants with funding to improve their equipment to increase the quality and value of their seafood, critical elements of the premium Louisiana seafood brand. Since 2012, STEP has provided more than \$1.7 million to members of Louisiana's seafood industry, including grants for docks and processors to upgrade equipment to meet Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals requirements. LDWF staff are improving the funding process, assessing future needs of the industry, and will be developing funding initiatives to meet those needs. For more information, call **225.765.3980** or **1.855.262.1764 (toll-free)**.

Louisiana Fisheries Forward (LFF)

LFF is a voluntary education and training program for members of Louisiana's seafood community. Created by LDWF and Louisiana Sea Grant, LFF delivers training videos and fact sheets on a number of topics such as how to be a commercial fisherman and seafood business finance and management as well as hands-on workshops, training days, and demonstrations to showcase new technology and best practices. LFF's goal is to help improve the economic success of Louisiana's commercial fishing industry. Learn more at lafisheriesforward.org.

Buyers and Sellers

Licenses and Permits

To purchase and resell crabs in Louisiana, you must have one of the following LDWF-issued licenses:		
If you:	You must have a:	Notes:
Buy crabs in Louisiana from commercial fishermen for sale or resale	Wholesale/Retail Seafood Dealer License	\$250 resident, \$1,105 nonresident. There are no restrictions on whom these licenseholders may sell seafood products to.
Buy crabs in Louisiana from commercial fishermen for sale or resale from a vehicle	Wholesale/Retail Seafood Dealer Vehicle License	\$250 resident, \$1,105 nonresident. There are no restrictions on whom these licenseholders may sell seafood products to.
Buy crabs from a licensed wholesale/retail seafood dealer for sale to consumers for personal or household use	Retail Seafood Dealer License	\$105 resident, \$405 nonresident
Buy crabs from a licensed wholesale/retail seafood dealer for sale to consumers for personal or household use from a vehicle	Retail Seafood Dealer Vehicle License	\$105 resident, \$405 nonresident
Are a commercial fisherman selling crabs to anyone who doesn't have a Louisiana Wholesale/Retail Dealer License (besides consumers) or transporting your catch out-of-state	Wholesale/Retail Seafood Dealer License	\$250 resident, \$1,105 nonresident
Are a commercial fisherman selling crabs directly to consumers within the state	Fresh Products License	\$20 resident, \$120 nonresident. A \$5 Resident Fresh Products-Spouse License is also available for a commercial fisherman's spouse to sell directly to consumers.
To export any crabs or crabmeat outside the state of Louisiana, you must have one of the following LDWF-issued licenses:		
If you:	You must have:	Notes:
Are a licensed wholesale/retail seafood dealer exporting any crabs or crabmeat outside the state of Louisiana	Wholesale Out-of-State Crab Shipping License	\$100 for residents and nonresidents
Are a licensed retail seafood dealer exporting any crabs or crabmeat outside the state of Louisiana	Retail Out-of-State Crab Shipping License	\$100 for residents and nonresidents

Recordkeeping and Reporting Requirements

Dealers and retailers must keep records of the following for three years:

- The quantity and species of crab you purchase, the date of purchase, and the full name and license and/or permit number of the commercial fisherman, wholesale/retail dealer, or out-of-state seller from whom you purchase the crab
- The quantity and species of crab you sell and the name and license number of the person to whom you sell it
- Quantity and species of crab and the date you sell it to consumers

Dealers and retailers purchasing from commercial fishermen or anyone other than a licensed wholesale/retail seafood dealer or fresh products licenseholder must report these transactions every month on LDWF-issued trip tickets, documenting information about the purchase, including what it is, where and how it was caught, sizes, quantities, etc. Commercial fishermen who sell their catch directly to consumers (fresh products licenseholders) must also complete and submit trip tickets. For details, call **225.765.2371**.

Shipping Requirements

You must mark all vehicles used to transport seafood with the name and address of your company. You must also plainly mark all shipments containing seafood and attach records, tags, or certificates showing your name and the receiver's name, an itemized statement of the number of pounds of seafood, and the names of each kind or species of seafood in the shipment.

Did you know?

- The blue crab's scientific name means "beautiful swimmer" (*Callinectes*) and "savory" (*sapidus*).
- Female blue crabs can produce two million to three million eggs per spawn (brood) and can spawn up to 18 times over their lifetime.

To operate any commercial transport vehicle and load, unload, or transport seafood, you must have one of the following LDWF-issued licenses:		
If you:	You must have a:	Notes:
Are a commercial fisherman transporting your catch to a wholesale/retail dealer	Commercial Fisherman's License	\$55 resident, \$460 nonresident
Are a licensed wholesale/retail seafood dealer delivering seafood	Seafood Transport License	\$30 for residents and nonresidents
Are a licensed retail seafood dealer picking up seafood from a wholesale/retail dealer and transporting it to your place of business	Seafood Transport License	\$30 for residents and nonresidents
Are transporting a licensed commercial fisherman's catch to a wholesale/retail dealer for sale	Seafood Transport License	\$30 for residents and nonresidents
Are a wholesale/retail seafood dealer	Seafood Transport License purchased with the dealer license	\$30 for residents and nonresidents
Ship seafood out of state	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wholesale or Retail Out-of-State Crab Shipping License (<i>see page 9</i>) • Wholesale/Retail Seafood Dealer License OR a Transport License purchased in connection with the dealer license 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wholesale or Retail Shipping License: \$100 • Dealer License: \$250 resident; \$1,105 nonresident • Transport License: \$30 for residents and nonresidents

Louisiana Blue Crab Facts

More than **80%**
of the total blue
crab harvest in the
Gulf comes from
Louisiana.

43
million
pounds of blue
crab are landed
in Louisiana in an
average year.

\$64
million
The dockside value
of Louisiana's
2014 blue crab
harvest.

Louisiana has the
1st
and only
blue crab fishery
to be certified sustainable
by the Marine
Stewardship Council
(MSC).

Get Involved!

To manage Louisiana's blue crab fishery, LDWF and the Commission rely on scientific data and landings records as well as public input. Our decisions directly impact you, so it's important that we have your input as we define management goals and strategies. We encourage you to participate in the management process to ensure that we consider your interests and that you understand the regulatory process and resulting management actions.

The Blue Crab Task Force (representatives from the blue crab industry and relevant state agencies) is responsible for advising LDWF and the Commission on managing and developing the crab industry in Louisiana. The task force meets regularly, and meetings are open to the public. See www.wlf.louisiana.gov/fishing/louisiana-blue-crab-task-force for more details.

The Commission's monthly meetings and our open regulatory process provide additional opportunities for public input.

Text and Email Alerts

Sign up to receive text and/or email notifications about season openings and closings, regulatory changes, and task force and Commission meetings at www.wlf.louisiana.gov/signup.



Drop us a line

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2000 Quail Drive | Baton Rouge, LA 70808
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www.wlf.louisiana.gov/fishing/commercial-crab